

Lehigh Valley Canoe Club

Comments on the 2006 Lehigh Gorge Whitewater Releases

From a Whitewater boater's perspective, the 2006 Lehigh Gorge season was excellent. No releases were canceled, and there were a few opportunities to boat on higher water levels. A 1365-ft above sea level pool at the Francis E. Walter Dam and lots of rain made this season a success.

The Army Corp of Engineers did a outstanding job of balancing recreation needs and flood control needs. This year had one of the worst rainstorm events in history. The ACE managed to prevent major damage downstream while keeping the lake level in a 5' through May and June to help the ecology of the lake, and also providing water releases for recreation and downstream ecology.

The LVCC commends the ACE and their partners on their efforts because the LVCC supports balanced usage of this resource. All LVCC members paddle some section of the Lehigh River, but many also live along the river, drink it's water, and enjoy the good fishing. As we are local residents, many of our members benefited directly or indirectly from the economic gains brought to the region by dependable White Water Releases.

The only negatives for this season are that the few high water days were due to rain; not dam operation. In fact on at least one occasion the ACE was releasing more water before the weekend release, cut the flow to 1000cfs to meet the release target on the weekend, and then increased the flow on Monday. The LVCC supports the higher flows up to 4000cfs rather than cutting back for a release.

The LVCC greatly appreciates the opportunity to comment on the 2006 season, and will also provide comments on the planning for the 2007 season.

The LVCC would like to thank the following groups for their efforts to improve this valuable resource:

The Wildlands Conservancy (especially Chris Kocher)
The Army Corp of Engineers Philadelphia District
The PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
Hickory Run and Lehigh Gorge State Park Officials
The Delaware River Basin Commission
The PA Fish and Boat Commission
F.E.W. Dam Operators